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Throwing Gum on the Sidewalk

Chewing gum is a type of confection traditionally made from tree sap, like chicle that comes from the sapodilla tree native to Central and South America. Natural chicle is a type of rubber that softens as it warms in your mouth. Like a mouthful of rubber bands, the chicle doesn't dissolve when you chew it.

Nowadays, for reasons of quality and economy, most chewing gum is made from an artificial man-made chicle, or synthetic rubber known as polyisobutylene. You should know that polyisobutylene is also used to make adhesives, agricultural chemicals, fiber optic compounds, caulk, sealant, 2-cycle engine oil, paper, and it's used as a gasoline/diesel fuel additive. Sounds tasty!

Chewing on a piece of rubber isn't very appealing, of course. So the people that make chewing gum mix the rubber with sugar and flavorings, like cinnamon, mint, wintergreen, and all kinds of fruit. When you chew it, the rubber releases the flavor into your mouth. M-m-m-m.

Once the flavor is gone, now what? Chewing gum can't be recycled like a plastic milk jug. It has no redeeming quality or use once the flavor is gone. Likely this is why so much of it ends up on the sidewalk and the bottom of your Sunday-go-to-meeting shoes, not to mention the underside of chairs and tables.

Chewing Gum Dos and Don'ts

- Chew with your mouth closed. You are not a cud-chewing cow.
- Avoid making noises as you chew. Cracking and popping noises are for July 4th celebrations, not gum chewing.
- Don't swallow your gum. It contains none of your required daily allowances of vitamins and minerals.
- Wrap your ABC (Already Been Chewed) gum in paper and dispose of it in a waste container.

CONSIDER THIS: Contrary to what you've heard, swallowed gum does not remain in your stomach for seven years, although it does stay on the bottom of your shoe for about that long.

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